Exploring the Lore

First Mission Edition

By Talon

Introduction

Most of the philosophy used by Jedi is taken from just a few pieces of Star Wars lore. We tend to draw mainly from the live action movies, from the Jedi Path book, and the Jedi Codes. Each order has their own document that provides their own tenets that defines what it means to be a Jedi to them; such as The Jedi Compass, The Jedi Circle, The 21 Maxims, The 16 Teachings and so on. These serve as the core documents of the Jedi Philosophy.

They've become the core because they are easy to use. First, they've been explored in depth for the past 20 years, so anyone that spends time in the Jedi Community is made abundantly aware of these principles. But they are also useful because of their clarity. It's so much easier to read the Jedi Rules of Behavior and be told point blank "Self-discipline was one of the key concepts of Jedi behavior..." It's not hard to deduce that to be a Jedi requires self-discipline. The novels, comics, games and television shows are like a mythology where we see the Jedi Philosophy acted out, rather than directly told to us and so it can be a little more difficult to discern. When we can zoom in on things from the fiction that the Jedi say or do; we then have to take the time to analyze it and judge whether or not it is something that can translate well into reality. That takes time and effort and it's just not as fun as just reading the novels, playing the games, and watching the television shows for entertainment sake alone.

In addition, there are Jedi that only have the opportunity to engage with a limited portion of the Lore. For the longest time I only paid attention to the movies and novels. I don't have access to the funds to really even keep up with that, most of the time. There are also Jedi that aren't even interested in Star Wars and are only Jedi because they enjoy seeing how Star Wars is used for self-development purposes. So, for the people that don't have access to the lore or just aren't interested in it, the philosophy that it contains is lost, unless it's introduced in a different format.

That is the purpose of Exploring the Lore; to provide ease of access to the philosophy so that we can get a more nuanced and developed look at what the philosophy can be instead of relying solely on the core sources.

This edition pulls from the comic story "First Mission", written by Justina Ireland for *The High Republic Adventures Annual 2021*.

I pulled several excerpts from the story that I thought were worth looking at. Each excerpt is followed by my own personal analysis of its usefulness for Jediists, but I am a limited being and may have missed something and have different views about certain things, so I encourage you to do your own analysis.

Analysis

For your analysis, I recommend using Jedi Opie Macleod's APBP Test.

Before getting into the APBP test, I'd like to introduce the concepts of exegesis and eisegesis.

Exegesis is the careful analysis of media with the purpose of exploring and interpreting what the author is trying to convey. This can include the exploration of context, themes, and symbolism. The primary purpose of exegesis is to understand the author's intent.

Eisegesis is the interpretation of media with the purpose of imposing the reader's opinion, agenda or bias into the interpretation.

This is an important distinction. It's easy and sometimes tempting to twist what a writer was trying to say in order to make it conform to a preexisting philosophical ideal that we hold. Eisegesis isn't necessarily wrong, but we have to be sure that the meaning that we impose on the media complements the rest of the Jedi Philosophy.

Example:

"The lightsaber is the weapon of a Jedi ... you are a Jedi." - Master Thon

Exegesis; Master Thon was trying to convince Nomi Sunrider to use a lightsaber. If she is a Jedi, then she needs to use a lightsaber.

Eisegesis; Living Crystal uses the lightsaber as a metaphor for life. That a well constructed life (lightsaber) is the weapon that a Jedi uses to defend light and life. It's certainly not how the writer intended that quote to be used and so we shouldn't use my interpretation, my metaphor, as a core piece of the Jedi Philosophy.

Now, on to the APBP! It stands for Applicable, Practical, Beneficial, and Positive.

Applicable
In my Exploring the Lore series I'll mainly be directly quoting Star Wars media. In analyzing that quote, we ask ourselves "Is the quote applicable to the real world?"

Example 1: "The lightsaber is the weapon of a Jedi ... you are a Jedi" - Master Thon

Is this applicable to the real world? Well, Lightsabers aren't real. So, if we're dealing with strict exegesis, then it's not really applicable. If we engage in eisegesis and have the lightsaber serve as a metaphor or symbol for something else, that does make it applicable.

Example 2: "A Jedi can never hesitate to respond to the call of duty." - Nomi Sunrider

Is this applicable to the real world? Absolutely, most people have duties to attend to.

Practical
"Is the quote practical?"

Example 1: Lightsabers

Is it practical to say that a lightsaber is the weapon of a Jedi? Since lightsabers don't exist in the real world, that's not practical. Even if we engaged in eisegesis and said that the lightsaber could just represent any kind of sword; is it practical to believe that a Jedi should carry a sword everywhere they go as the fictional ones carried lightsabers? Probably not. However, if the lightsaber is a metaphor, as I use for Living Crystal, it can be practical.

Example 2: Duty

Is it practical to say that a Jedi shouldn't hesitate to fulfill their duties? Yes. If a Jedi is a parent and has a duty to care for their child, it's practical to say that they shouldn't hesitate to step up and provide that care.

Beneficial
"Will it be beneficial to apply the quote to my life?"

Example 1: Lightsabers

Would it be beneficial to say that a lightsaber is the weapon of a real Jedi? Again, since they don't exist, probably not. If the lightsaber represents a sword, then we could say that learning to use a sword would bring a variety of positive benefits, even if it's not particularly practical.

Example 2: Duty

Would it be beneficial to be quick to attend to one's duties? I believe so. I find that I'm happier if I attend to my duties quickly, that way I can focus my free time on relaxing rather than ruminating over the duty.

Positive
The last question we ask is "Does the application of the quote provide positive value to you and those around you?"

Example 1: Lightsaber
Does saying that a lightsaber is the weapon of a Jedi add value to you and those around you? Lightsabers don't exist. Pretending that one does or insisting that because you're a Jedi that you should carry a sword with you everywhere is probably going to do a lot more harm than good.

Example 2: Duty
Does quickly fulfilling your duties provide something positive to you and to your family, friends and peers? I would say that it speaks well to your personal character and would be valued by those that you are responsible for.

These are only simple approaches; there are so many different angles that you can look at the philosophy from. Have fun with it and see what you can come up with.

Excerpt One

How can I properly train you if I don't know your skills?

- Stellan Gios

On the surface this excerpt doesn't look like it contains much Jedi Philosophy. But, it's a rhetorical question that reveals plenty about how a Jedi should think.

How many of us have entered a training program and were immediately introduced to a curriculum and were then overwhelmed because there were so many questions that needed to be answered that weren't or completely bored because it was material that we had explored many times before?

In either case, your time is being wasted because value isn't being added as it should. Is that being respectful of your time?

Jedi often get locked into hierarchical thinking. Those that have been around a while seem to believe that they are aware of what those lower than them in the hierarchy need to learn. They launch right into a prescribed training plan without considering that the student may have different priorities and different needs. Training must begin with an introductory phase where the student and the teacher evaluate each other's needs.

We are Jedi. Core to our philosophy is the idea that Jedi should serve and not rule over others. We should be looking through the lens of Jedi philosophy even when it comes to teaching that very philosophy.

Serve by asking 'How can I meet my student's needs?' This requires a personal touch. You can't discover someone's need by having them fill out a questionnaire or by having them respond in essay format to a lecture that you've written. Neither method is going to get an accurate picture of what your student needs. Mainly, because the student probably isn't fully aware of their own needs.

I've started plenty of training programs by asking a student what they wanted to learn. The vast majority of them had no idea. All they knew was that they wanted

to be a Jedi. My follow-up question was always ‘What does it mean to be a Jedi?’ Most often that was answered ‘I don’t know, that’s what I’m here to learn.’

This isn’t a bad start; but we must be willing to go deeper. Everyone joins a Jedi program for some reason. There was something that inspired them to begin training or they wouldn’t be willing to spend their time and energy on it. To serve them means to explore that and help them move closer to becoming the thing that inspired them. Painting with broad strokes; that’s their need, to close the gap between who they are and what inspires them.

With a finer point; find a pain point in their life that Jedi training can help them with. Find out what the student could learn that could drastically improve the quality of their life that you have the qualifications to teach.

A pain point might be loneliness. It might be that they just need a friend to talk to and who is willing to invest their time and energy into them.

Another pain point could be a lack of support. There are people that want to become a Jedi because there is something deeply attractive about the Master and Apprentice model; having someone who is going to be there as a friend and a guide.

Putting people that struggle with those two pains through a solo training program isn’t going to help meet their needs. They would be better served having someone guiding them to develop meaningful connections. You can’t know that if you don’t engage in a personal conversation.

It’s a simple rhetorical question; but it reveals a manner of thinking. It’s ‘I want to meet you where you’re at. How can I best serve you?’ That’s the attitude of a Jedi.

Your Analysis

For each of these excerpts; use Jedi Opie MacLeod's APBP test to determine for yourself whether it adds value to your understanding of the Jedi Philosophy.

How is it applicable?

How is it practical?

How is it beneficial?

How is it positive?

Learning Prompts

How often has the training you've received fit your specific needs as a person?

If you were to set your own agenda for training, what would you be studying?

What does it mean to be a Jedi?

What do you need to learn in order to become closer to what the fictional Jedi inspires you to become?

Your Thoughts

Excerpt Two

Diplomacy is essential to being a Jedi.

- Stellan Gios

There are two definitions of the word 'Diplomacy':

1. The art or practice of conducting international relations and negotiations between nations.
2. The skill of managing relationships and negotiations between people without arousing ill will: Tact.

The fictional Jedi were often sent on diplomatic missions at the behest of the Galactic Republic. The first definition applied to them. At present, there are no Jedi that I'm aware of that are ambassadors or diplomats. If they are, they weren't selected for that role because they were Jedi. The first definition doesn't apply to us. So, the second definition is going to be what I focus on for this excerpt.

Every being; whether in the Star Wars galaxy or our own, has to manage their relationships with other beings. If we look at our relationships through the lens of the core philosophy, it is obvious that Jedi must learn to be diplomatic in their actions and conversations. "There is peace." "Jedi are the guardians of peace..."

This is a tall order. It is the attempt to control something that isn't controllable. I can not control how you will react to what I say. How many times have you said something that you thought was pretty neutral or even positive and someone took offense? Or perhaps you realized after the words left your mouth that it was insensitive?

Conflict will always exist. Peace isn't the absence of conflict. It certainly isn't the avoidance of conflict. True peace is the creation of a system where conflict can play out in a constructive manner.

Jedi seek peace. If someone is doing something that bothers me, just ignoring the issue doesn't create peace. It just hides the conflict that already exists. Only by

addressing the issue and possibly hurting the person's feelings can the conflict begin to be resolved and actual peace restored.

For example; if my friend always stands far too close to me when I talk to him and it makes me uncomfortable, conflict exists even if my friend doesn't realize it. He's making me uncomfortable. I can bite my tongue and not say anything and maintain the appearance of peace, but there is still conflict. My personal space is still being invaded and I'll still feel uncomfortable. Maybe, as time passes, I'll grow more accustomed to having my space invaded and so my personal bubble will shrink and it'll cease to be a problem.

Or, I could grow to resent his lack of respect for my personal space and start avoiding having conversations with him in situations where he can invade my space. It is possible that this one act could damage or utterly destroy the friendship and my friend may not even be aware that there is an issue.

Peace will come when the issue is brought up and steps are taken to resolve the conflict. Too many believe that because the Jedi Philosophy calls for harmony and peace that there is no room for conflict. But Jedi also serve. To hold back that there is conflict places you in the position of the ruler, rather than the one serving. In keeping silent about an issue, you are making the decision to deny the other person the possibility of resolving the conflict.

The path to peace is understanding conflict and the appropriate response to the specific situation. That takes training.

There are a lot of Jedi that will focus the majority of their time and energy on developing skills that have very limited practical application in their day to day lives. Diplomacy is a skill set that will improve the quality of life of every single person that takes it seriously enough to begin developing that skill set.

"Diplomacy is essential to being a Jedi." Don't write it off as something secondary, something to be gotten to when you have the time. It is essential. Take the time to learn active listening, developing rapport, conflict resolution, emotional and social intelligence, learning body language and developing your personal charisma. These things will help your relationships with your friends, family, romantic partner, coworkers, fellow Jedi, your teachers and your bosses.

If you want more intimate and fulfilling relationships with your loved ones, learning diplomacy will help you. If you want to be more successful in your studies and your career, learning diplomacy will help. Make the study of diplomacy an ongoing part of your Jedi training.

Your Analysis

How is it applicable?

How is it practical?

How is it beneficial?

How is it positive?

Learning Prompts

How important are interpersonal relationships to a Jedi?

What does it mean to pursue peace and harmony to you, as a Jedi?

Is it appropriate for a Jedi to withhold information that someone needs to make informed decisions in order to save their feelings?

How important is studying the skills associated with diplomacy to the Jedi? How much training have you pursued in that area?

Your Thoughts

Excerpt Three

A Jedi should not gloat.

- Lynela Kabe-Oyu

Gloating is the malicious satisfaction at someone else's misfortune. It is the inverse of envy, where you resent someone else's fortune.

The intensity of emotions associated with gloating and envy are in direct proportion to both the heights that a person has risen and the degree of dislike that you feel toward them.

If you feel some resentment at their success it means that you harbor a sense that either they don't have the knowledge, skill, values or traits needed to achieve that success and are not deserving of it; or you believe that you are more deserving.

You take satisfaction in their misfortune for the same reason. You feel that the person didn't earn their success and their loss or misfortune is what they deserve. They are humbled and 'put in their place.' Justice, from your point of view, has prevailed.

Notice that you won't resent a close friend's success. You believe in them and their abilities and find them deserving of what they achieve. Their successes are just them taking another step toward grasping what you feel they deserve. When they suffer misfortune you'll share in their pain.

"Don't gloat" is an extension of the core tenet from the Jedi Behaviors "Conquer Arrogance." Both gloating and envy start when you compare your worthiness against theirs and judge them to be less worthy.

If you gloat about your own accomplishments you will actually minimize that accomplishment. If you've done something that is worth feeling pride for, then feel pride. Let the accomplishment speak for itself. Whether or not other people value that accomplishment can not diminish it. So, trying to validate it by bringing it to other people's attention or rubbing someone's face in it, cheapens it.

Bitterness, gossip, and discord are often a result of envy. These destroy the harmony within relationships and toxify communities.

So, if a Jedi should not gloat or feel envy, what should we be instead?

The remedy is to be humble and to remember that none of us have gotten to where we are on our own. We all have stood on the backs of others; our parents, our teachers, friends, and coaches. Even books, television and movies have played a role in influencing who you've become. All of us have benefited from things that we didn't deserve. And yet all of us are equally worthy by virtue of our shared humanity.

Step back and be objective. Your dislike for the person tends to cloud your vision and possibly minimizes their level of skill and knowledge as well as their integrity to their own personal values. A lot of dislike and mistrust is due to different values and priorities. These differences create diversity which provides us with different perspectives that allow us to see problems in unique ways. Working together improves the problem solving skills of a group and stimulates innovation.

Emotions aren’t bad in and of themselves, they are just signals that highlight our thoughts, beliefs, and values. Gloating is a signal that a need isn’t being met. For example; it may indicate that you don’t feel that your efforts are valued and respected and so, when someone fails, you gloat in an attempt to bring attention to yourself in order to receive validation. This is a helpful signal, because it allows you to seek healthier ways to satisfy your need for respect.

Your Analysis

How is it applicable?

How is it practical?

How is it beneficial?

How is it positive?

Learning Prompts

Is there a time when it would be appropriate for a Jedi to gloat?

How do you like to receive validation for your accomplishments?

Think of someone who held a position that you didn't feel they deserved; why didn't they deserve that position? How might their values and priorities be different from yours?

Have you ever benefited from something that you didn't deserve? If you lost that benefit, how would you feel if someone gloated about it?

Your Thoughts

Excerpt Four

A Jedi defends life, no matter the odds.

- Stellan Gios

If this is read as 'Never surrender, never retreat', it's a bad idea. A Jedi has to know when a battle can't be won and withdraw in order to regroup and prepare to fight again. Life is too precious to waste it on some foolish heroic last stand.

I like to interpret it to mean that life is so important that you never give up on it. Be willing to lose the battle, but never give up on the war.

First, look at the defense of life intrinsically. Do you defend life in and for yourself?

Do you take the time to exercise and eat a balanced diet so that you can live a healthier life? Do you refrain from using addictive substances that are known to be destructive to your body or your mind? Do you take care of your hygiene, bathing and brushing your teeth to maintain the health of your skin and teeth?

Do you defend your mental health? Do you maintain a balanced diet of media that you consume? Do you spend all your time doom scrolling, paying attention to the news or other social media drama? When you do pay attention to the news, do you make sure to keep an objective look, paying attention to news that you agree with as well as news that you don't agree with so that you're not trapped by bias confirmation? When there is drama, do you avoid the gossip and get information from sources on both sides of the issue?

Do you defend your spiritual health? Do you take time to pray and/or meditate? Spend time in stillness to center yourself as well as for personal contemplation. Do you spend time in nature, or in crowds, if that is what energizes you? Do you take the time to seek out and develop deep and meaningful relationships with other people?

Ultimately, do you defend your own life; taking time and making the effort to be truly alive, rather than just existing?

Extrinsic defense of life is somewhat obvious. It could very well mean physically defending someone from harm against all odds; but hopefully you'll never have to face a situation like that.

Defense of life can also be to defend people against other types of harm. Fighting racism and sexism defends the dignity of someone's life. Speaking out against genocide and unjust wars is a clear defense of life. Speaking out against policies that force people into poverty and denies them access to food, water, medicine and education is a defense of their quality of life.

There are probably thousands of different ways that you can defend life and all of these things should be done against all odds.

Intrinsically, it doesn't matter if you have a terminal illness, you do what you can to be as healthy as you can even though the odds aren't in your favor. You take the time to meditate and be still, even when you're extremely busy and the odds are against you finding a good time for it. You still try.

Extrinsically, there will always be those in power that are willing to do everything that they can to retain that power. But against all odds, we still fight. Racism, sexism and human trafficking may never be completely eliminated. But against all odds, we still fight.

Your Analysis

How is it applicable?

How is it practical?

How is it beneficial?

How is it positive?

Learning Prompts

Should a Jedi have a ‘never surrender’ attitude?

What practices do you have that defend your own life?

Have you ever been in a situation where you’ve had to defend someone else’s life? Is the likelihood of that happening high enough for it to be a major focus of your Jedi training?

What can you do to defend the lives of others, that goes beyond just talk, to make a difference?

Your Thoughts

Excerpt Five

You cannot always solely rely on the force, sometimes there are surprises.

- Stellan Gios

There are Jedi that equate the force as God. I believe that they would be very reluctant to accept the idea as part of their philosophy that you can not solely rely on God. That may even be the case for those that believe that the force is an energy field much like electricity that surrounds us and binds us together; to partially quote Obi-wan.

However, I think everyone who has attempted to obey the will of God or use supernatural powers would agree that we cannot always rely on that. I've never met a person that would honestly claim that they can reliably use this type of power.

We can not solely rely on the force, not because it's the force that is unreliable -- but because it is us who are unreliable.

Human beings are fallible creatures and no matter how attuned we think we are with the supernatural, we will miss things. We'll make mistakes. The force is always there, but we have personal limitations that may make it so that we can't touch it like we want at any given moment. So, we need to have skills rooted in the practical to help deal with those times.

A hurricane hit the coast and the government gave evacuation orders, telling citizens to get out before the area started flooding. The national guard was called and began driving through the area in large trucks to pick up people that had been stranded by the rising tide.

They came across a man standing in his yard in knee deep water. "Come on!" They called, "Get in the truck, we'll take you somewhere safe."

"No," the man responded. "God will save me!"

The water rose and a sheriff's deputy came by in a boat. "Get in! We'll take you somewhere dry!"

"No," the man responded. "God will save me!"

The boat leaves and the water continues to rise. Eventually the water rises so high that only the peak of the roof is left above water.

A helicopter flies up to the man sitting on his roof. "We're here to help, climb up!"

"No," the man responded. "God will save me!"

The water rises and washes the man away. He arrives in heaven where God is waiting for him. "I had faith in you! Why did you let me die?" asks the man.

"What do you mean? I sent a truck, a boat and a helicopter to save you."

It's a silly joke that I'm sure you've heard before, but it illustrates in a humorous way how we can get fixated on how we think that God, energy, or the force should work and miss out on the opportunities that are being provided.

I've spoken to Jedi that believe in complete reliance on the force. They refuse to create plans, refuse to make real decisions, and just go where 'the force' leads. To me this sounds like poor stewardship of life. If I am just a leaf floating where the force blows; then what point is there to me being me?

I personally believe that I have my personality; full of my interests, passions, skills and knowledge on purpose. It is my responsibility to properly manage that collection of bits to be the most effective servant that I can become. My responsibility.

Just relying solely on the force, expecting it to send me exactly where I'm needed -- I'm handing off all personal responsibility for my life and placing it in the hands of 'the force.' If I don't succeed, If I don't amount to anything ... Well, that's the force's fault and not mine because it's supposed to take me to where I'm supposed to go. That's a cop out. It's a way to escape actually living and really making a positive impact on the world. I don't believe that's the behavior of a Jedi, do you?

Your Analysis

How is it applicable?

How is it practical?

How is it beneficial?

How is it positive?

Learning Prompts

How do you define the force?

Using that definition, what would it mean to rely solely upon it?

Do you believe it is possible to be in-errantly led by the force?

Does your reliance on the force absolve you of any responsibility for how you live your life?

Your Thoughts